

Occupy 101 Syllabus

15 min. – Slide presentation explaining the background of Occupy Boston

5 min. – Break to collect proposals; write your proposal ideas and bring them to the Facilitator;

We will have a brief vote to choose the first proposal, since our time is limited.

30 min. – General Assembly, using a proposal selected by the group

5 min. Wrap up



What is America's current situation?

"Wealth has become concentrated in "too big to fail" corporations and among a small percent of Americans, leaving most of us with less and less opportunity to get ahead through hard work.

"Many politicians seem to worry more about their rich donors than about their constituents.

"Wall Street conglomerates have hurt the entire country and seem immune from oversight.

IF U.S. LAND WERE DIVIDED LIKE U.S. WEALTH



<http://think-progress.tumblr.com/post/12028328182/wed-be-very-squished-via#notes>

How did the Occupy Movement start?

In July, 2011 a blog at Adbusters suggested a demonstration to call attention to the lack of consequences on Wall Street for the financial crisis of 2008. They suggested the slogan: DEMOCRACY NOT CORPORATOCRACY.



On September 17, 2011, hundreds of people were willing to drop their comforts and make a visible statement by occupying public space near Wall Street, indefinitely.

And, within weeks...

How did the Occupy Movement grow?

Thousands of people responded by setting up similar encampments, using a group-building process to figure out next steps for ourselves and our communities.



Occupations in hundreds of American cities have brought attention to the need for thinking and acting together. Government, business, religious and community leaders who have been working in their own organizations applaud renewed citizen activism. Each of us becomes a part of the “occupation” whenever we discuss our country’s issues together or support each other.

Who is Occupy Boston?

People participate through Facebook and the internet, by donating money, time or supplies. Many people visit the site or honk in approval at the signs along Atlantic Ave.

Surveys show that most people at Dewey Square are employed, and support Occupy Boston in their spare time.

Yes, they do take showers – at a local charity if they are full time tent-dwellers.

Like our democracy, Occupy includes a large range of individuals with their own priorities and thoughts. Hearing all voices is a core value of the movement.



What is Occupy Boston's purpose?

The Occupy Boston General Assembly adopted a Statement of Purpose on October 23:

"We the people who have occupied Dewey Square, under the name Occupy Boston, have done so in order to maintain a place where all voices are welcome for the open discussion of ideas, grievances and potential solutions to the problems apparent in our society. We are and will be holding general assemblies where proposals may be brought to the group as a whole, to be consented to. We have and will continue to occupy this space for the purpose of democracy."



What are Occupy Boston's Core Values?

At a summit of about 250 participants in November, an informal graphic captured the ideas from a World Café discussion.



Some ground rules and shared values are emphasized in the Occupy movement:

- “ democratic voting and acceptance of decisions approved by General Assembly;
- “ respectful inclusion of all people working within the Occupy community and/or the General Assembly process;
- “ transparency of discussions, decisions and actions;
- “ nonviolence in the fullest sense of the word, which includes resistance to systemic violence.

What is the point of Occupy Boston?

Working Groups freely form to address issues that people think are important. Common ideas appear in slogans as well as Working Groups:

improving opportunities for all people;



reducing the power of money in government;



reducing the risk to our economy from "too big to fail" conglomerates.



When a Working Group or any individual has a proposal that they want the entire Occupy Boston community to consider, they bring it to the General Assembly.

What is General Assembly?

“General Assembly is similar to a town meeting, but uses some interesting techniques to guide a collaborative discussion.

“General Assembly is open to everyone. If you occupy a tent, volunteer or visit, you can take part in decisions.

“General Assembly usually goes on about two hours, led by a Facilitator. It allows a large group to slowly reach agreement with everyone participating.

- “ Announcements and proposals are heard in the order received by the volunteer keeping a list (called the “stack.”)
- “ The whole group discusses each proposal using a defined sequence to keep the group thinking together, so that separate debates don’t take over. This cycle is repeated until the proposer stops accepting amendments:
 1. questions and facts;
 2. objections and statements of support;
 3. amendments;
 4. blocks, which result in tabling the proposal;
 5. restatement of the proposal with amendments addressed;
 6. repeat cycle.
- “ When all issues have been addressed, a vote is taken, requiring 75% approval to pass.



“Minutes are kept and posted on www.occupyboston.org/wiki/ and are filed in the Library for those without internet access.

How does Occupy Boston function?

Working Groups organize and handle practical matters, in cooperation with Boston City public safety departments and local facilities. Like GA, Working Groups are open to all volunteers. Some Working Group functions are:



- "Financial Accountability" accounts for donations and expenditures, including a fund set aside for restoring the Rose Kennedy Greenway.
- "Logistics" organizes supplies and structures, along with the "Winterization and Fire Safety" group.
- "Food" stores and serves donated food, and cleans reusable dishes, passing City of Boston inspection.
- "Medical" handles First Aid and triage for the camp.
- "Safety" patrols the camp and intervenes if minor conflicts happen.
- "Legal" advises and supports people regarding legal consequences of civil disobedience actions.
- "Media" handles publicity and "Library" maintains a central information resource.
- "Outreach," "Solidarity," "Students" and "InterOccupation" coordinate with outside organizations.

How can I participate?

Visit Dewey Square (across from South Station in downtown Boston) and check the online calendar on www.occupyboston.org for weather and events.

“Come to a General Assembly;

“Listen to a speaker or sit with a Working Group meeting;

“Hold your own sign on the Atlantic Ave. sidewalk or join a march;

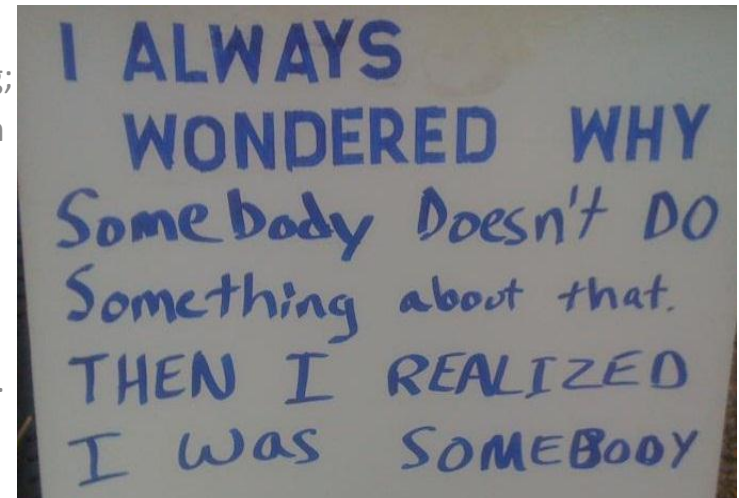
“Talk with people in camp.

Donate or volunteer. (See www.occupyboston.org for suggestions.)

Organize a local discussion or demonstration where you live.

Support local citizen action groups, vote and speak out to your elected officials.

Talk to people about your views and what you think we should do together.



Together, we're all "occupying!"



Where do we go from here?

The vision from the November summit at Occupy Boston includes many hopes:



But it is up to us to decide.
Let's start by having our
own General Assembly.



General Assembly Structure



General Assembly cycles through these steps, in order:

1. Clarifying questions;
2. Points of Information (facts);
3. Strong concerns or objections
4. Statements of support;
5. Friendly amendments;
6. Blocks, which result in tabling the proposal if 10% think it is a legitimate block and then 75% support the block;
7. Proposer gets a few minutes to consider and respond to concerns and amendments; if no proposer stepped forward, the Facilitator can ask for another volunteer to respond on behalf of the proposal;
8. Restatement of the proposal with amendments addressed;
9. repeat cycle.
10. When all issues have been addressed, a vote is taken, requiring 75% approval to pass.